

Interim Report of the ad-hoc Implementation Committee (ImpCom) June 2011

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Charge: The charge of the committee, adopted by the senate from the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Constitutional Change from 2010-11, is:

"... we recommend that Senate establish an ad hoc committee for implementation of these constitutional and related non-constitutional changes. The ad hoc committee will advise the Senate steering committee on implementation and track the progress and outcomes of implementation by gathering data for annual reports to the Senate on its effectiveness. The data should address changes in electoral participation, the representativeness, turnover, and absenteeism of Senators, and in the priorities and experiences of Senators and their leadership."

Activity: The committee met throughout the academic year, with a calendar that included a meeting in December 2010 with Sarah Andrews-Collier, Secretary to the Faculty, to learn more about the elections process and the broader context for our work; a meeting with the Steering Committee in January 2011; and a presentation to the Senate, including a survey of members, in February 2011. ImpCom intends to submit its final report in October after the Senate has voted on a new constitutional amendment that is described below under "Unfinished business".

The following paragraphs provide more details about the work that the committee did in several areas, including information about associated outcomes in each case.

Changes in eligibility: The constitutional changes introduced in June 2010 resulted in a change in the rules for eligibility in Senate elections, but no specific proposal was developed to describe the process for determining membership according to the changed rules. ImpCom determined that many of the necessary decisions could be made, starting from an initial list pulled from HR data, by the Secretary of the Faculty in consultation with appropriate deans (including the Dean of Graduate Studies for units without a Dean). As part of this process, each eligible faculty member was assigned to a single division, even if their appointment was split between divisions. ImpCom concluded that there should be an "appeals" process that could be used by any person who felt that they had been incorrectly eliminated from senate eligibility or otherwise assigned to the wrong division in this process. As yet, however, no such appeals have been received.

Reduction in senate size: The constitutional changes introduced in June 2010 called for a significant reduction in the size of the Senate, reducing the total number of Senators by 50% by, changing the ratio of senators to faculty from 1:10 to 1:20. The constitutional change committee had sketched one plan for gradual reduction in the size of the Senate, but had indicated a preference for a more dramatic strategy that would elect a completely new slate of Senators in the 2011 election. ImpCom reviewed these proposals but, contrary to the previous committee, developed a consensus for a more gradual transition. To a large degree, this was a result of a

concurrent decision to recommend switching from an opt-out model to an opt-in strategy for Senate elections, which is described separately below. ImpCom’s plan for moving to a smaller size over a period of three years was presented in the Senate meeting of February 2011, and subsequently documented in more detail once the numbers of eligible faculty in each division were known. That document is included as an attachment to the current report.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to follow the proposed plan exactly. Although the number of opt-ins received was healthy (see below), the constitutionally mandated nominations phase of the election resulted in a smaller overall slate. At the same time, we also saw larger than expected attrition among sitting senators. As a result, although the final results of the election were not known at the time this report was prepared, we expect that the size of the Senate in 2011-2012 will be closer to the final target than the number suggested by the ImpCom plan .

Encouraging more committed Senators: A key motivation for the constitutional changes that were adopted in June 2010 was to move towards a Senate that is more pro-active, more participative, and more effective as an advocate for PSU’s future. ImpCom discussed a broad range of proposals in this area, which included: developing a covenant of expectations, a more explicit “job description”, and a clearer notion of constituency for individual senators; calling for senators to communicate recent senate activity and future goals to the faculty represented by the senator; and further extending the constitution to include a more direct definition of the senate in addition to listing its functions.

The proposal that received most attention, however, was the switch from the “opt-out” system that had been used to allow individual faculty to decline from standing for election to the Senate, the Advisory Committee, and the IFS, to a new “opt-in” system. The committee felt that this significant change would be likely to increase participation by faculty who desire to serve in Senate, or who are encouraged by their colleagues to stand for election. Early feedback on the plan to switch to an opt-in approach was positive although there was some concern about what would happen if we did not receive enough opt-ins. Based on anecdotal evidence, such as the number of self-nominations in previous election years, the committee concluded that this risk was low. In addition, the committee felt that the risk was mitigated by the decision to move to a smaller senate over a period of three years, providing an opportunity to reconsider the decision in future years. The following table shows details from the ImpCom plan for resizing the senate together with initial data about the number of opt-ins that were received from the faculty as of March 31, 2011. These numbers show that the opt-in approach produced at least twice as many potential candidates as there were positions to be filled in all but one division (SSW). The data also shows a particularly high level of interest in senate participation among All Others (AO).

Division	AO	CLAS-AL	CLAS-SS	CLAS-SCI	CUPA	ECS	SFPA	GSE	SSW	LIB	SBA	OI	Totals
Number of eligible faculty	150	178	119	154	87	99	65	76	80	21	67	34	1130
Opt-Ins received as of 3/31	30	10	6	13	5	7	2	3	1	0	5	5	87
Senators to elect in 2011	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	17

Communication: The need for improved communication between the Senate and the Faculty was identified in the final report of the 2009-10 ad-hoc committee. As part of this, ImpCom drafted a letter to the faculty to explain the changes that were being made, including details about the switch from opt-out to opt-in nominations for senate elections. A copy of this letter was included as item G-1 in the February 2011 Senate packet, and subsequently posted on the Faculty Senate web page, with a link to this document being sent to all faculty members.

The committee also attempted to develop language and graphics for the new opt-in form that would clearly distinguish it from the previous opt-out form. The intent in changing the form was to minimize the chances that a busy faculty member might fail to notice the change from opt-out to opt-in and then complete the form incorrectly. Unfortunately, some of these changes could not be adopted because of limitations in the format that is used to ensure that returned forms are machine-readable. We do know that some faculty members already in Senate were confused by these forms and returned them unnecessarily. However, we are not aware of any faculty member having returned the form when in fact they had intended to be opting out. The potential for confusion between opt-in and opt-out will be avoided in the future if the decision to use an opt-in approach is continued and becomes well established. Nevertheless, there is probably still potential for making further improvements to clarify the purpose of the form.

Evaluation: ImpCom's charge included collecting data to evaluate the effectiveness of the constitutional changes that were made in June 2010. The committee believes that this work will span multiple years as the senate transitions to its reduced size and as the changes in the Senate become better known throughout PSU. To assist in this process, ImpCom developed a one-page form that was used to survey members of the Senate who were present at the February 2011 meeting; a total of 62 completed surveys were collected at this time. The survey is designed to be repeated next year, without any changes to the form, so that the results of the two surveys can be tabulated, compared, and used as input to the ongoing evaluation. A copy of the survey form was included in the March 2011 Senate packet (the minutes of the February 2011 Senate meeting).

Our discussions identified some other data sources that we felt would provide useful input for evaluating faculty engagement with the senate, including: changes in attendance at senate meetings (measured as percentages to allow for changes in senate size); the number of faculty who have designated alternates; and participation in elections, including the number of faculty who choose to opt-in as nominees and who cast votes in the election. The committee also felt that it would be useful to conduct an annual review of the topics that have been covered in Senate during the past year to assess relevance and to evaluate the extent to which the Senate has behaved in a strategic rather than a reactive manner.

Unfinished Business: The constitutional amendment that was passed in June 2010, after the completion of that year's elections process, left us with a Senate whose size and distribution of members were not consistent with the new constitution. To address this, a new amendment has been developed that will allow for variance between the constitution and the senate's size and distribution while it completes the current transition over the next three years. The new amendment will be presented, with the support of ImpCom, at the June 2011 Senate meeting, and formally brought forward for a vote in October. Once the new amendment is adopted,

ImpCom will deliver its final report and then leave the new steering committee either to manage further details of the transition, or else to appoint a new ad hoc committee to continue the work.

Recommendations: The Faculty Senate at PSU is in the process of making some significant changes towards a senate that, in the words of the previous ad-hoc committee, is “more proactive, more participative, and more effective as an advocate for PSU’s future.” Some of the changes that were recommended by the previous committee have already been enacted (such as the use of an agenda-setting summer retreat for senate leadership, the use of a Presiding Officer Elect position, and the extension of steering committee member terms to two years), while others are still in progress. To further assist the Senate as it makes these changes, the implementation committee offers the following recommendations.

- *Continue the use of opt-ins:* The response to the switch from opt-out to opt-in was good; we believe that this strategy should be continued, and we believe that it will contribute to the goals of a more engaged and participative senate membership. An additional benefit of the opt-in process is that it results in a smaller and more manageable slate of candidates for the election. In past years, the slate for IFS and for Advisory Council exceeded 600 and the slate for CLAS exceeded 200; in both cases, this was the result of faculty failing to return the opt-out form.
- *Streamline the elections process:* The current elections process (including phases for determining eligibility, collecting faculty opt-ins, soliciting nominations from this pool, and then conducting the actual election) is very complex. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some faculty have been confused by the forms that support this process. The reliance on paper forms makes it hard for faculty who are off campus at critical times to participate in the election, and makes it hard for a faculty member to know that their response has been received and not lost or delayed in campus mail. In addition, the nominations and elections forms can only be completed by cross-referencing the forms with information that is published on the web, creating an additional complication and disincentive for faculty participation. Finally, there is a substantial administrative burden to the current elections process, much of which is placed on the Secretary to the Faculty. Responding to these observations, we recommend:
 - *Elimination of the nominations phase:* We believe that the use of an opt-in strategy eliminates the need for an additional nominations process. Eliminating this portion of the elections process will also simplify the overall elections process. In past years, the same nominations process has also been used to finalize the slate for elections to IFS and Advisory Council. Because these are at-large elections, we believe that the nominations phase can also be eliminated in these cases, even though it will result in a larger slate of voters.
 - *Development of an on-line elections system:* We believe that a system using electronic ballots will provide faculty with an easier way to participate in elections, and will allow ballots to be customized to particular individuals or divisions. There are multiple ways to authenticate voters in such systems to prevent unauthorized or duplicate votes. However, in the event that an on-line system is not possible, then a

paper-only solution should be adopted instead so that there is no need for voters to rely on cross referencing between paper and online documents.

- *Modification of the opt-in form:* We believe that the opt-in form should be modified to include information about recent senate activities and priorities, as well as a “job description” for faculty senators. This will provide potential senators, including those who are new to the university or who have no previous experience in senate, with more information to better understand what they are being asked to opt-in to. In addition, it will provide a channel for sharing a brief, mid-year faculty senate update with all members of the faculty.
 - *Allocation of resources:* We believe that it is necessary to provide more support for the Secretary of the Faculty in administering the elections process, and to facilitate the development of an on-line elections system.
 - *Increase communication through sitting senators:* There is a natural role for sitting senators to play in identifying prospective new senators. We recommend that sitting senators take an active role in organizing and participating in meetings within their divisions to share information about Senate, and to encourage interested faculty to self nominate as part of the opt-in process. Sitting senators can also play a key role in notifying colleagues and encouraging them to step forward if the initial number of opt-ins in a senate division does not meet the target that is needed for the election. We believe that this is a particularly appropriate way to reach out to faculty because of the potential that it has to reinforce the relationship between senators and the constituencies of faculty members that they represent.
 - *Continue the use of an agenda setting retreat:* We believe that the agenda setting retreat of faculty senate leadership and chairs of major committees was effective, and that this event should be included in the annual faculty senate calendar.
 - *Continue the evaluation process:* The task of tracking progress and evaluating the effectiveness of the senate under the revised constitution is an ongoing process. We believe that this activity requires continuing attention. In particular, we believe that the survey conducted in February 2011 should be repeated at the same time next year, without any changes to the survey form, and the results be tabulated and compared with those from the 2011 survey. Some resources should be allocated to provide support for tabulating and analyzing the data that is collected. This might be accomplished, for example, by hiring a GA to help with the evaluation process.
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